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# A Report to the Board of Supervisors

# REDEVELOPMENT IN DIAMOND HEIGHTS

A description of existing conditions of arrested development and a recommendation for the designation of Redevelopment Area B by the Board of Supervisors.

March 1950

Prepared by the Redevelopment Agency in consultation with the Department of City Planning

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100 LARKIN STREET

SAN FRANCISCO 2, CALIFORNIA

The Honorable Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco

## Gentlemen:

This report entitled "REDEVELOPMENT IN DIAMOND HEIGHTS" is submitted to you for your consideration. It has been prepared by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, in consultation with the San Francisco Department of City Planning, in accordance with Section 33 of the Community Redevelopment Act of California, which states (in part) "The (redevelopment) agency or the Planning Commission may request the legislative body of the community to designate one or more areas within the community as a redevelopment area or areas."

In August 1948 the Board of Supervisors officially designated the Western Addition as Redevelopment Area A. In the report, submitted herewith, the Redevelopment Agency recommends and requests the designation of Redevelopment Area B by the Board of Supervisors in accordance with the provisions of the Community Redevelopment Act.

Area B comprises a chain of three barren hills just southeast of Twin Peaks, together with Glen Canyon along the western edge of the area. Portola Drive and Clipper Street Extension form the northern boundary and provide ready access to downtown San Francisco and to the Mission District. Diamond Street, south from Clipper, climbs the eastern slopes of the hills, and, when extended, will lead into the central portion of the area. Because Diamond Street is one of the principal arteries serving Area B, it is proposed that the area be called "Diamond Heights."

Most of the Diamond Heights area is still open land. Redevelopment of such an area is new to San Francisco's redevelopment program. However, the use of redevelopment powers in certain types of vacant areas is authorized in Section 2 of the Community Redevelopment Act. In particular, subsection 2(b) declares an area to be blighted when there exists an economic dislocation or disse as a result of faulty planning, lots laid out in disregard of the contours, or inadequate streets and utilities. Section 2 further states:

"That such conditions of blight are chiefly found in areas which have been subdivided into small parcels, that in most instances the lands are held in divided and widely scattered ownerships, frequently under defective titles, that in many such instances the private assembly of the lands in blighted areas for purposes of



redevelopment is so difficult and costly that it is uneconomic and as a practical matter impossible for individual owners independently or collectively to undertake to remedy such conditions because of lack of the legal power necessary for, and the excessive costs involved in, the private acquisition of the real property of the area; that the remedying of such conditions may require the public acquisition at fair prices of adequate areas, the clearance of the areas through demolition of existing obsolete, inadequate, unsafe and unsanitary buildings and the redevelopment of the areas suffering from such conditions under proper supervision, with appropriate planning, and continuing land use and construction policies."

With a platted street pattern entirely unsuited to the steep grades, a great diversity of ownership and a lack of building development in spite of nearly a century of real estate activity, the Diamond Heights area clearly qualifies under these provisions as coming within the scope of the powers granted to a Redevelopment Agency by the Community Redevelopment Act.

Since nearly all of San Francisco's land available for building is already in use, the few remaining vacant areas should promptly be brought into such condition that new homes may be built, the housing shortage eased and the redevelopment in built-up areas suffering from blight, deterioration and obsolescence facilitated. In those vacant areas which qualify under the Act and where private enterprise alone cannot effectively operate, the City should make use of its redevelopment powers in order to make private building possible.

The significance of designating the area as a 'redevelopment area' is:

- 1. The legislative body finds that Area B in general is a blighted area whose redevelopment is necessary to effectuate the public purposes declared in the Community Redevelopment Act.
- 2. The legislative body acknowledges the report of the Redevelopment Agency and instructs the Department of City Planning and the Agency to study further how the area should be redeveloped.

After the area has been designated a redevelopment area, it will be the responsibility of the Department of City Planning to prepare preliminary plans for the redevelopment of one or more project areas within the redevelopment area. Such preliminary plans will be submitted to the Redevelopment Agency, which will then prepare tentative redevelopment plans. After public hearings, these plans will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors for approval.



The Board of Supervisors must approve both these tentative redevelopment plans and the final redevelopment plans before the Redevelopment Agency may buy any land. Designating an area as a redevelopment area requests that further studies be made, but does not permit the Redevelopment Agency to purchase any property.

Respectfully submitted,

The Redevelopment Agency of the City and County of San Francisco

Morgan A. Gunst Chairman



	TABLE OF CONTENTS	Page
Letter	of Transmittal	I
Table	IV	
List o	V	
Aerial	VI	
Summar	VII	
Principal Recommendation		
Preliminary Site Plan		
I E	Existing Conditions	1
E G L	Land Ferms Existing Land Uses Prades of Platted Streets Land Ownership Caxpaying and Non-taxpaying property	
E	Carly Development and Arrested Growth Carly Subdivisions Factors Retarding Development	8
L B P	The Redevelopment Process  Legal Designation of Area B as Blighted  Boundaries of Area B  Project Plans  Financial Considerations	11
P N S S S	Che Contribution of Redevelopment in Diamond Heighte to San Francisco  Carks for City-wide Use  Wew Homes  Streets  Schools  Chopping  Planning and Redevelopment  Helation of Redevelopment in Diamond Heights  and in the Jefferson Square Neighborhood	17

V An Approach to Site Planning

21



# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND TABLES

Plate No.	<u>Title</u>	following page
Photo	Aerial View of the Diamond Heights Area	V
1	Site Plan (preliminary study)	IX
2	Location	1
3	Improved Properties	3
4	Street Grades	4
5	Principal Land Owners	6
6	Public Lands and Improved Streets	7
Table No.	<u>Title</u>	page
1	Summary of Land Uses	3
2	Distribution of Land Ownership	6



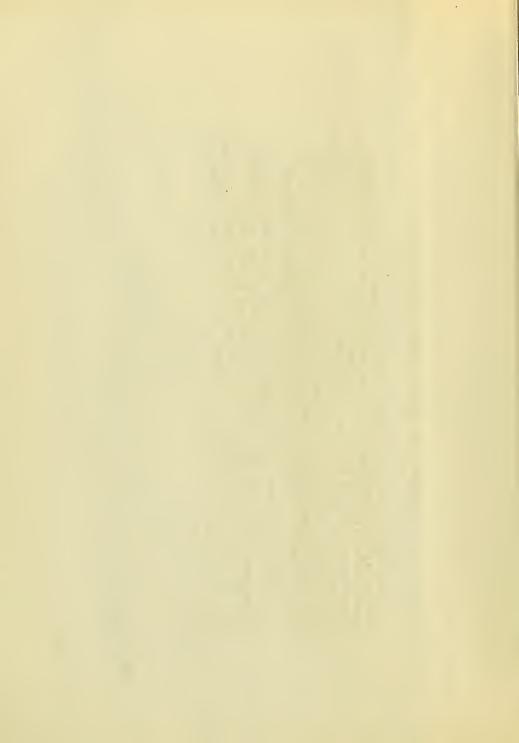


Aerial view of the DIAMOND HEIGHTS AREA showing the approximate boundary of the proposed redevelopment area

# AERIAL VIEW OF THE DIAMOND HEIGHTS AREA

The western limit together with surrounding areas, was taken from the southeast looking small wooded area (center). The eastern and southern boundaries lie This view, showing the barren hills proposed for redevelopment, at the fringe of the built up sections (lower right and foreground). is O'Shaughnessy Boulevard, winding up the west side of Glen Canyon toward the Pacific Ocean. The approximate boundary of the proposed [left center]. On the north is Portola Drive just in front of the redevelopment area is indicated on the photograph.

built on the sloping hillsides and hilltops. Two new school sites and dedicated to park use. New residences, including fine and modestly priced homes and possibly apartments of various types, would be small shopping centers are also proposed. Very few, if any, exist-Under the proposed redevelopment plan, Glen Canyon would be ing buildings would be disturbed.



In proposing the Diamond Heights area, lying between the southwest portion of the Mission District and O'Shaughnessy Boulevard\*, as a redevelopment area, the Redevelopment Agency finds that:

- The Diamond Heights area conforms to the definition of a blighted area as stated in the Community Redevelopment Act.
- Redevelopment in Diamond Heights by combined public and private initiative will effectuate the purposes of the Community Redevelopment Act. Private enterprise alone cannot effectively accomplish land assembly and redevelopment in an area of such scattered ownership.
- All properties included in the proposed redevelopment area will be necessary for, or may be affected by, the redevelopment of the entire area.
- 4. Redevelopment in Diamond Heights would bring into use some 332 acres of land that are now undeveloped (see Plate 3), largely because of steep grades, inappropriately platted streets (see Plate 4), and diverse ownership of the land. (See Plate 5).
- 5. Large parts of the area were originally subdivided as early as 1863 and 1864. Since that time, most of the remainder of the area has been subdivided, many portions have been resubdivided and parcels of land have changed hands countless times. However, after many years of real estate activity, less than ten per cent of the area has been used for building. Since private enterprise alone has been unable to bring the area into use, redevelopment under joint public-private initiative is needed.
- 6. Redevelopment would offer the opportunity to keep Glen Canyon, which lies along the southwesterly edge of the area, as an open space for general citywide recreation use, including the Day Camp proposed by the Recreation Department.
- \* The proposed boundaries of the redevelopment area are as follows: on the north, Clipper Street Extension and Portola Drive; on the west, O'Shaughnessy Boulevard; along the southern boundary, Bosworth, Elk, Sussex, Castro and Laidley streets; along the eastern boundary, Laidley, Thirtieth, Castro, Valley, Diamond, Twenty-eighth and Douglass streets. (See Plate 3). Within the area so bounded, one or more project areas will be selected for detailed study and for the proposed redevelopment operations. Very few, if any, of the existing buildings in the area would be disturbed.



- 7. Redevelopment would provide room for 2500 to 3000 new homes in one of San Francisco's potentially most attractive areas. These homes, including possibly detached house, row houses and flats and apartments of various types, would be built by San Francisco builders, large and small. Some of the homes would be sold, and others rented, to families of middle, and possibly other, income groups.
- 8. The new housing provided by redevelopment in Diamond Heights would ease the San Francisco housing shortage, making possible more rapid redevelopment of built up areas of blight.
- 9. Redevelopment would give some of the present land owners an opportunity to bring their land into use by direct participation in the overall redevelopment plan.
- 10. Redevelopment would key new neighborhoods into San Francisco's official Master Plan. Along with the new homes would be new schools, playgrounds and small shopping centers. These new neighborhoods would be developed using the most modern standards for new city design, to combine natural beauty with contemporary comfort.

# PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATION

The Redevelopment Agency, in view of the material presented in this report, recommends and requests that the Board of Supervisors declare Area B, as described herein, a redevelopment area, in accordance with the Community Redevelopment Act of California.



## PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN

In order to indicate the type of development contemplated in Diamond Heights, a preliminary site plan has been prepared (see Plate 1). Since site planning studies are still in the very early stages, this preliminate plan is to be considered merely as suggestive of one general scheme of development and as indicative of one possible approach to the application of modern planning principles to the area. If and when the Board of Supervisors designate the area as a Redevelopment Area, more thorough site planning studies will be undertaken, including consultation with the many public agencies and private interests concerned. The tentative plan, to be presented for later consideration by the Board of Supervisors, may vary in many particulars from the preliminary plan shown here.

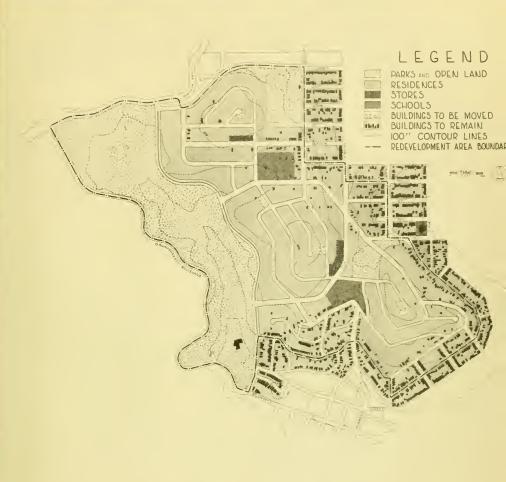
# The main features of the plan include:

- A Canyon Drive on the east side of Glen Canyon connecting Portola Drive and Bosworth street, providing access to the new residential sections on the upper hillsides and hilltops to the east, and separating these sections from the proposed park in Glen Canyon.
- 2. Other secondary thoroughfares, such as the extension of Diamond Street, to provide ready access to all parts of the city including nearby existing and proposed traffic arteries in the Mission District (Army Street widening to Clipper Extension and Mission Freeway).
- 3. Local streets with reasonable grades fitted to the steep hillsides and planned so as to discourage fast through traffic.
- 4. Two new school sites to accommodate the child population in the area and to prevent overcrowding in nearby schools.
- Two small conveniently located shopping centers for neighborhood stores and businesses serving the families in the area.
- Sites for a wide range of residential building types, many of them with superb views.

Suggestions for the exact number and types of residential structures to be provided by large and small private builders will be made at a later date. It is contemplated, however, that the area would contain detached dwellings and row houses, both for sale and for rent. In addition, flats, garden apartments, step-down apartments and other types of multi-family buildings appear to be appropriate in certain sections. The extremely steep hillsides will require integrated planning of streets and dwellings in order to provide an attractive living



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PRELIMINARY STUDY

THE DIAMOND HEIGHTS AREA

SITE PLAN



environment. To take full advantage of the opportunities of the site, close cooperation will be required between expert site planners, architects, engineers, building contractors, investors and financing institutions. Such a cooperative approach is necessary in order to provide, at moderate cost, a community of pleasant, livable homes on a difficult site.



## PART I

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Diamond Heights area, which is recommended for immediate designation as a redevelopment area, is in the center of San Francisco. Plate 2, a map of San Francisco, shows its location and its relation to the rest of the city. The proposed redevelopment area includes the chain of barren hills just southeast of the Twin Peaks, together with Glen Canyon at their western edge. Along the rim of Glen Canyon runs O'Shaughnessy Boulevard forming the westerly boundary of the area. To the north is Clipper Street Extension and Douglass Playground. To the east lies Noe Valley, the fringe of the Inner Mission District. To the south are the Fairmount and Glen Park sections.

Within these boundaries lie some 371 acres of hills and canyon, virtually vacant.

# Land Forms

The Diamond Heights area comprises a chain of three hills and a canyon. The most northerly hilltop, called Red Rock Hill, has an elevation of 690 feet above sea level. South from this height, the land slopes sharply to a relatively level saddle, and then rises again to a summit, known as Gold Mine Hill, which is 680 feet above sea level. Southeasterly from Gold Mine Hill lies Fairmount Heights which rises to an elevation of 540 feet. The lowest point in the area, approximately 220 feet above sea level, is at the mouth of Glen Canyon at the edge of Glen Park Playground.

The surface of the hills is barren, relieved by occasional outcroppings of rock. The canyon bottom has a grove of eucalyptus trees, is quite rugged, and is not far from its original "wilderness" state. It is a natural "greenbelt", or open space separating built-up districts.

The hillsides slope so much that a special street layout needs to be designed for them. The land is so steep that an uncomprising gridiron system is entirely inappropriate. Only 15 per cent of the land has a slope of less than 10 per cent; 18 per cent of the proposed redevelopment area has a slope of between 10 and 20 per cent; 30 per cent has a slope between 20 and 30 per cent; and 37 per cent of the area has a slope of over 30 per cent. The significance of "per cent of slope" can be illustrated by the fact that most cars must shift into low gear to get up a 20 per cent grade, and streets of 30 per cent grade are not built because cars could not get up them. Therefore, when a gridiron street system is designed to spread over hills like those in the Diamond Heights area, the result is that many streets are never built; if they were built, they could not be used.



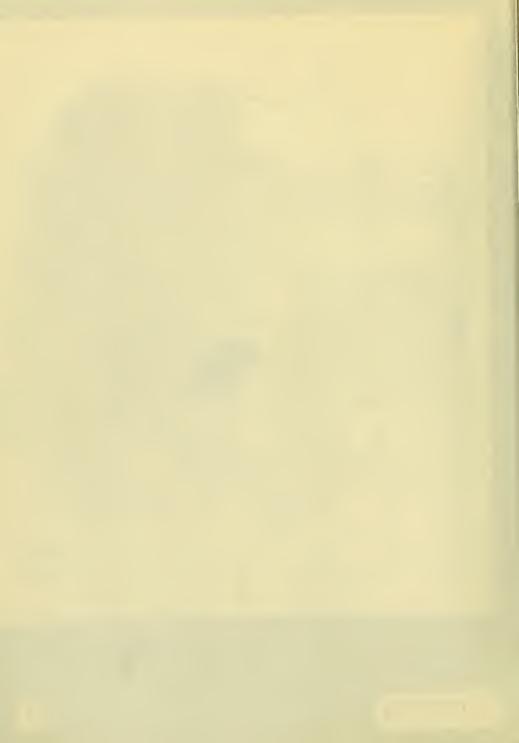
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THE DIAMOND HEIGHTS AREA

LOCATION

2



### Existing Land Uses

There are 371.4 acres in the proposed redevelopment area. Of these, 281 acres are vacant. Only 31.7 acres are used for residence, 17.6 acres for parks, and 23.1 acres for paved streets. Table 1, on the following page, gives a detailed account of just how the land is used.

Plate 3 shows in black the areas that are in use. Vacant or unused areas in blocks are left white. Those streets which have some type of paving are shown by solid parallel lines. Dashed parallel lines indicate unpaved streets. In most cases, these streets are not in existence except on paper.

There are two truck storage yards in the center of the area. Both of these are illegal uses under the zoning code. Neither yard should be permitted to stay in the area, because of the dangers and unpleasantness of large trucks driving through residential areas. A radio transmitter is also located in the area. This use is legal.



## Summary of Land Uses

Type of Land Use		Area in Acres	Percentage Distr Gross Area	
*2 *3 *4 *5	Residence Parks, Playgrounds Industry Utilities Commerce Vacant	31.7 17.6 .7 .2 .1 227.2	8.5% 4.7 .2 .0 .0 61.3	11.4% 6.3 .3 .1 .0 81.9
	Total Net Area	277.5		100.0
*7	Streets	93.8	25.3	
•	Total Gross Area	371.3	100.0	

Source: Computed from 1947 Land Use Maps and aerial maps in the files of the Department of City Planning, and field surveys.

\*1 Residence: in the 31.7 acres there are approximately 450 houses. Of these 85% are within 400' of the redevelopment area boundary.

\*2 Parks, Playgrounds: Glen Park - 7.9 acres, Douglass

Playground - 9.7 acres.

\*3 Industry: 0.7 acres are used by two truck storage yards.

These are illegal uses under the zoning code.

\*4 Utilities: 0.2 acres used for the transmitter of radio station KWBR-FM.

\*5 Commerce: There is one corner grocery store within the

boundaries of the redevelopment area.

\*6 Vacant area: includes 25 blocks which are entirely unsubdivided, out of a total of 88 assessor's blocks wholly or partially within the boundaries of the proposed redevelopment area. Most of the unsubdivided blocks lie in the canyon section or on the steeper hillsides.

\*7 Streets: Of the 93.8 acres in platted streets, 77.6 acres are in the area, and 16.2 acres are boundary streets.

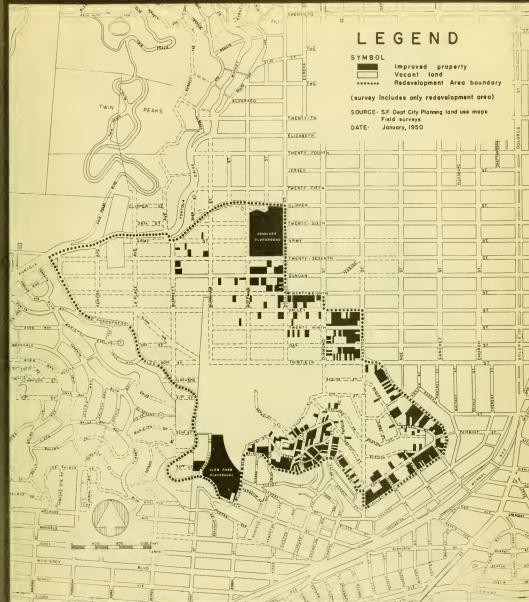
Of the 77.6 acres in the area, 11.8 acres are paved, and

65.8 unpaved.

Note: Of the gross area of 371.3 acres, 70.7 acres are unpaved streets and 227.2 acres are vacant land. Considering these uses both as "unused" gives a total of 297.9 acres of unused land, or 80.2% of the gross area. The area in economic use, therefore, is 73.4 acres, or 19.8% of the gross area of 371.3 acres.

The net area of the redevelopment area (that is, the total area except for streets) is 277.5 acres, Of this, 227.2 acres or 81.9% are vacant. There are 50.3 acres in economic use, or only 18.1% of the net area of 277.5 acres.





THE DIAMOND HEIGHTS AREA



The figures in Table 1 deserve scrutiny. Of the 93.8 acres in streets, 16.2 acres are boundary streets, leaving 77.6 acres of streets within the area itself. Of these 77.6 acres of streets, 70.7 acres are unpaved. Of the unpaved streets, 35 per cent are dirt roads, and 65 per cent exist only on the subdivision maps.

Of the 297.9 acres of vacant property, 227.2 acres are vacant land in the blocks, and 70.7 acres are in unpaved streets in the area. Most of this land is still barren hillside, completely unimproved and unused. As shown in Table 1, 81.9 per cent of the net areal and 80.2 per cent of the gross areal is vacant. These vacant areas do not include parks or playgrounds; 80.2 per cent vacant means that four-fifths of the land is entirely unimproved, that four-fifths of the land is not in "economic use."

The 31.7 acres used for residence contain some 450 dwellings. Of these, 85 per cent are in the fringe area, within 400 feet of the boundary line. Less than 70 dwellings are in the inner part of the area. Three-fifths of the houses were built before 1919, and four out of five were built before 1937. Thus, only one house out of five has been built in the past thirteen years.

In land hungry, house hungry San Francisco very little other vacant land remains. It seems apparent, then, that the Diamond Heights area is one of "arrested development."

# Grades of Platted Streets

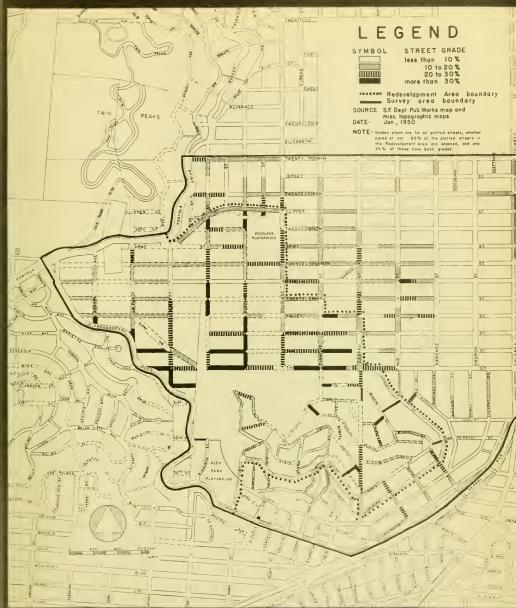
The grades of the platted (designed on paper) streets are shown graphically on Plate 4. While not all the street grades are impractical, enough of them are so steep that they make circulation in the area difficult.

A check on street grades shows that about 12 per cent of the streets as platted have a grade of over 30 per cent, 18 per cent have grades between 20 and 30 per cent; 30 per cent of the streets have grades between 10 and 20 per cent, and the remaining 40 per cent of the streets have a grade of less than 10 per cent. As a general rule, no streets should be steeper than 20 per cent. But in the proposed redevelopment area, a total of 30 per cent of the platted streets have a grade of 20 per cent or more.

Net Area - does not include area for streets.
2Gross area - total area within the boundaries, including streets.
3These figures come from a check of a 1919 Land Use map, aerial photographs taken in 1937 and 1948, now in the files of the Department of City Planning, and a field check made early in 1950.



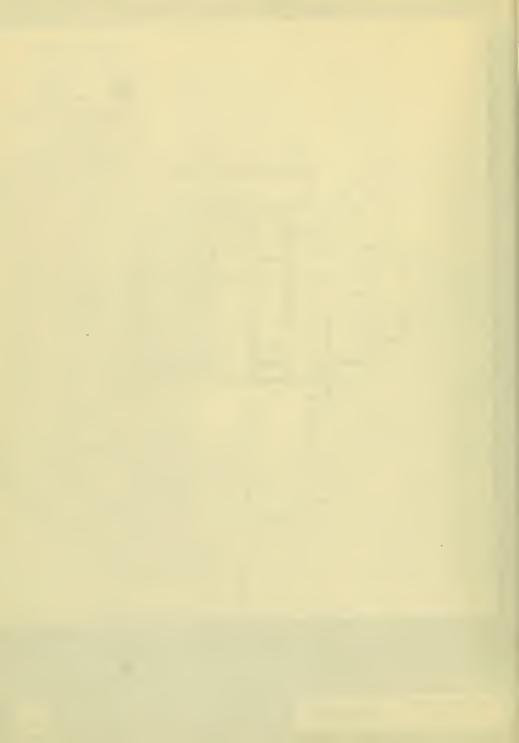
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THE DIAMOND HEIGHTS AREA

STREET GRADES

4



## Land Ownership

Land ownership is shown in Plate 5, and is tabulated in Table 2. This table shows that the City and County of San Francisco owns 89.2 acres in the blocks in the proposed redevelopment area, and 93.8 acres in streets. The area within the blocks is about one-third of all the net land area. Most of the city land is now held by the Public Utilities Commission. Originally acquired for a water storage reservoir, the land was never so used because arrangements for the storage of water were made elsewhere. When city ownership is expressed as including land both in the blocks and in the streets, the 183.0 acres in these categories amount to 49.3 per cent of the gross area.

Seven acres of the city property are in the Glen Park Playground. Originally intended to serve just the neighborhood of Glen Park, this playground and adjoining canyon areas in public ownership are now used as a day camp for children from all over the city. The Recreation Commission has proposed acquiring the valley floor north of the playground as far as Valley Street for use as a day camp. This acquisition was part of the Master Plan for Youth bond program, approved by the voters in 1947. This land is now owned by the Public Utilities Commission and the San Francisco Housing Authority.

The San Francisco Housing Authority owns some 29.4 acres on the bottom and on the east side of Glen Canyon, just above Glen Fark. The Authority has proposed to use about 16 acres of this tract on the side of the canyon for a low-rent housing project. However, the future use of this tract is uncertain since the City Planning Commission, on March 9, 1950, refused to approve a zoning change which would permit construction of the project as originally designed. Should the project be redesigned to conform to the present zoning (R-1), it should be made to fit into the general redevelopment plan in terms of streets, building areas, provision of schools, stores, parks and playgrounds. Coordination of any housing development with the growth of the rest of the area would be greatly facilitated by the designation of Area B as a redevelopment area.

The San Francisco Unified School District has indicated an intention to acquire some five and a half blocks of land lying between Gold Mine Hill and Red Rock Hill. This area is outlined in Plate 5. The School District proposes to build an elementary school here, as well as to provide a large enough site for future junior and senior high schools. The elementary school is in conformity with the Master Plan of the Department of City Planning; the precise locations for the other schools are subject to further study. The proposed redevelopment plans for the area will be so arranged that sites will be reserved for schools pending final determination of their location.

Table 2

# Distribution of Land Ownership

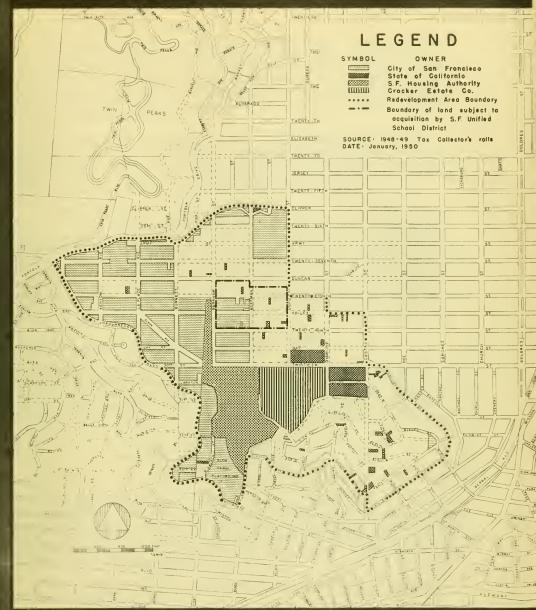
Owner	Area in Acres	Percentage Dist Gross Area	
City and County of S.F. S.F. Housing Authority Crocker Estate Co.	89.2 29.4 21.3	24.0% 7.9 5.7	32.2% 10.6 7.7
State of California Thomas Valerga Atlas Realty Co.	12.0 5.2 3.8	3.2 1.4 1.0	4.3 1.8 1.4
Fay Improvement Co. Rosenberg Bros. All others	2.9 2.9 110.8	0.8 0.8 29.9	1.0 1.0 40.0
Total Net Area	277.5		100.0
Platted streets	93.8	25.3	
Total Gross Area	371.3	100.0	

Source: 1948-49 Tax Collector's rolls.

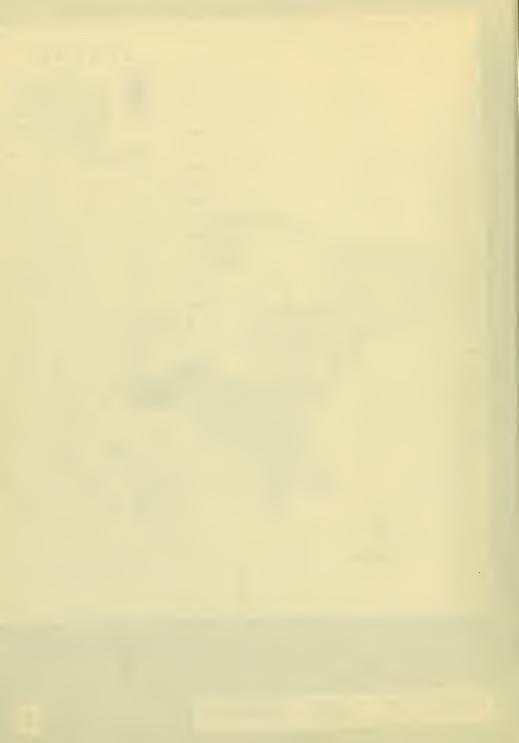
Crocker Estate Company.

# Note: Public lands include:

	Percentage of Gross Area
Streets City property State property S.F. Housing Authority	25.3% 24.0 3.2 7.9
Total	60.4%



THE DIAMOND HEIGHTS AREA



The Crocker Estate Company owns about 21.3 acres at the top and on the southern side of Gold Mine Hill. Representatives of this Company have shown interest in developing this property but the Agency has not been advised of any decisive steps toward this end. Such development should be keyed into the plan for the entire Redevelopment Area, in order to form a well planned community.

The State of California holds tax-deeded title to 12.0 acres (4.3 per cent of the net area) in the proposed redevelopment area. This is property for which taxes have been delinquent for five years or more, and which, therefore, may now be sold at public auction or transferred to the city.

Thomas Valerga, a private developer, owns 5.2 acres, and is in the process of making large-scale cuts for new housing sites on Fairmount Hill. Atlas Realty Company, a subsidiary of Standard Building Company, owns 3.8 acres in scattered lots north of Gold Mine Hill. The Fay Improvement Company and Rosenberg Brothers, both paving contractors, each own one block on Red Rock Hill, used as quarries. There are several hundred other small property owners in the area owning 110.8 acres, which is 40.0 per cent of the total net area, or 29.9 per cent of the gross area.

## Taxpaying and Non-taxpaying Property

Plate 6 shows in white the lands that made a tax contribution to San Francisco within the past five years. Some of the properties shown in white, however, have had tax delinquencies for shorter periods. The other lands, in black, have given no support to the city. Included in the non-taxpaying lands are:

(a) City owned vacant land
(b) Tax deeded lands
(c) Unpaved streets
(d) San Francisco Housing Authority lands

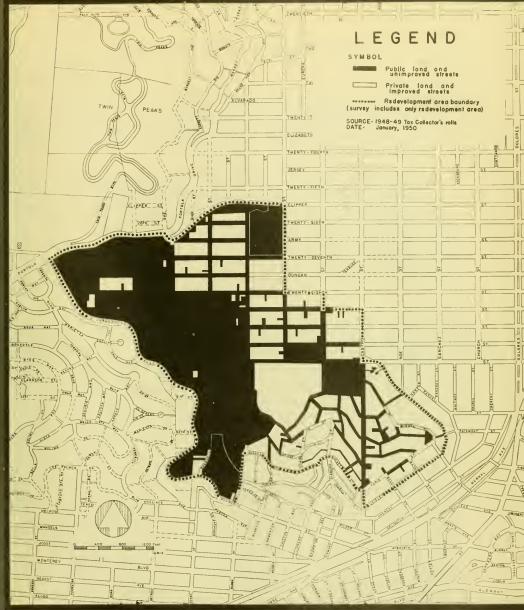
All streets with full paving are shown in white, on the assumption that they form an integral part of the residential neighborhoods they serve. Although Glen Park and Douglass Playground make no direct tax contribution, and are therefore shown in black, they support and enhance the value of private properties in the vicinity which are subject to taxes.

The non-tax contributing areas make up 60.4 per cent of the total area.

The San Francisco Housing Authority makes payments in lieu of taxes on its improved properties. It does not, however, make payments on vacant lands in its ownership.



SAN FRANCISCO REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY



THE DIAMOND HEIGHTS AREA

PUBLIC LANDS AND UNIMPROVED STREETS



#### PART II

#### EARLY DEVELOPMENT AND ARRESTED GROWTH

#### Early Subdivisions

Early records show that part of the proposed Redevelopment Area was in the San Miguel Rancho. Later various tracts in the vicinity were acquired by the Crocker interests, Leland Stanford and others. The original Crocker holding was 166 acres and Leland Stanford held 589 acres.

Large parts of the area were included in subdivision tracts recorded nearly a century ago. Horner's Addition to the Mission District, recorded in 1863, extended south to Thirtieth street and up the steep slopes to the summits of Gold Mine and Red Rock Hills. The Fairmount Tract, recorded in 1864, extended south from Thirtieth street and as far west as Castro street. Subdivision in the Glen Park district began as early as 1871 and some parts of the section have been subdivided and re-subdivided several times. Stanford Heights, on both sides and in the upper part of Glen Canyon, was first recorded as a subdivision tract in 1891.

In spite of the natural attractiveness of this part of the city, the sale of lots was slow and the hilltops never were built up. Developers endeavored through the years to sell their holdings to the public. In the Glen Park section, the sale of lots and building activity was greatest immediately after the fire, in the early 1920's, and in the present decade. The Crocker Estate Company's activity was largely in a series of small subdivisions recorded as Glen Park Terrace (1900 and 1905), the Addition to Castro Street Addition (1910), and small portions of Glen Park Terrace (1912), and Addition to Thirtieth and Mission Street Extension (1913). The Company's big effort was in the period after the fire. Potential buyers were invited to make their homes among the pines in a veritable Switzerland. A real estate brochure of 1908 described Glen Park in glowing terms as the most beautiful residence property in the city, with pines, acacias, and other plantings, a mild fog-free climate, and desirable neighbors. Sunday excursions and picnics were organized to the Company's private picnic area on the site of what is now Glen Park Playground. Lots were priced from \$300 to \$550 and higher on attractive terms. From 1921 to 1925 the Crocker Estate Company had another sales campaign which included the sale of houses built by them as well as the sale of the lots. From 1925 to 1945 there was little activity. Since the war, the Company has sold about 100 lots to Thomas Valerga, but still retains 21 acres of unsubdivided land.

# Factors Retarding Development

An important reason for the slowness of the area to develop has been that up until the present time more level land has been available elsewhere in the city. There was a



choice between the hilly contours of the proposed redevelopment area and land in the Mission District, and later in the Sunset, Richmond, and Ingleside Districts, and in other parts of the city. The greater cost of building on steep hillsides, as well as the greater cost of putting in street, sewer, and water facilities, caused people to build in other areas. On the hilltops and in Stanford Heights no sewers were put in. Lots in the area had the typical dimensions of San Francisco lots. They were narrow and deep -- 25 or 26 feet wide by 114 to as much as 178 feet deep. There were some triangular and wedge shaped lots. The steep slope of the lots affected adversely their attractiveness for mortgage loans. Subdivision in the area was premature in terms of the market for this hilly type of land.

In the various Glen Park Terrace and Castro Street Additions and in the Fairmount Tract an attempt was made to have streets follow the contours, but many streets go straight uphill, and in other subdivisions the gridiron is adhered to regardless of the grades. Many of the street installations were not complete; there was only rough grading in the early days. Streets were platted but never installed, especially on the tops of Fairmount Hill, Gold Mine Hill, Red Rock Hill, and in Stanford Heights. Some streets were platted to go up hill at 25, 30 and 35 per cent grades. Some of the streets were installed by companies under contract to real estate developers. It has been reported that, because of the slow sale of lots and the expense of installing streets, one company forfeited a number of hillside lots to a street contractor in 1932. In some cases, owners of lots along unpaved streets organized and brought pressure to have the streets paved under public proceedings. In other cases, lot owners not intending to build immediately resisted pressures to improve streets in front of their properties, since they would be required to pay special assessments.

Over the years, sporadic sales of small parcels have left the area divided among several hundred different owners. Some owners have clear title to their property; other parcels have encumbrances of various types. As already mentioned, the State of California holds tax-deed title to 12 acres comprising 37 parcels. Taxes on these parcels have not been paid for at least five years. In addition, other parcels have been tax delinquent for shorter periods. In many cases, this situation is indicative not so much of financial inability of the owners to pay taxes as of a lack of interest on their part in retaining ownership of land which they do not intend to develop. Moreover, "tax-sold property" with excessive slopes or not fronting on improved streets is not attractive to buyers. Redevelopment will serve to clear clouded titles of tax delinquent and other encumbered properties, as well as to assemble the land so that well planned streets may be installed and attractive building sites offered for sale.

Another factor indicating retarded development in the area is the absence of good public transportation. In the early days two street car lines and the cable car on Castro



street served houses on the lower slopes. Five bus lines now give good service to Glen Park and the built up hill-side sections on the eastern side of the proposed redevelopment area. However, the uphill walk after leaving public transit vehicles at the end of the day has undoubtedly been a deterring factor to development of the higher slopes and hilltops. When a large scale building program takes place in the redevelopment area, it can be expected that adequate bus service will be provided.

One other factor accounting for arrested development of the area has been the lack of a plan for its future. There has been no assurance to the possible settlers that there would be convenient schools or stores in the area. A plan is needed now to show where these "community facilities" should go; land for them should be reserved now, before it becomes built up and very expensive. A plan for the area should be made now to include the redesign of streets, the inclusion of schools, playgrounds, parks, and shopping centers. All of this is part of the redevelopment process.



#### PART III

#### THE REDEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Redevelopment is the process by which the Redevelopment Agency assembles land in blighted areas, removes dilapidated and obsolescent structures, redesigns the areas to provide well planned communities, provides any necessary streets and utilities, and prepares the land for sale or lease to private enterprise for building. The Redevelopment Agency does no building itself.

The Redevelopment Agency has been established to do only those things that private enterprise is unable to do. The Agency has been given the authority to assemble land, using the power of eminent domain when necessary. Furthermore, when the costs of acquiring blighted property are greater than the fair value for the land after any needed clearance and site preparation, the Agency may absorb such expense, with the aid of local and federal financial grants, before selling it back to private enterprise for rebuilding. In the case of an unbuilt area of arrested development such as Diamond Heights, however, it seems probable that redevelopment will favorably affect land values so that no local or federal grants will be needed.

The law making it possible for local communities to undertake redevelopment is the California Community Redevelopment Act of 1945, as amended in 1949. This act defines blight and sets up the machinery for its elimination within areas designated by the local governing body.

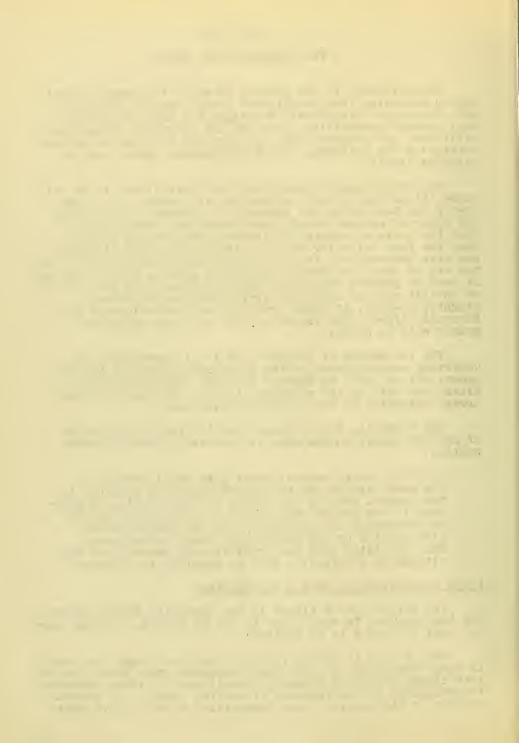
The Community Redevelopment Act invites participation of present owners in the area as provided in the following section:

'SEC 47. Every redevelopment plan shall provide for participation in the redevelopment of property in the project area by the owners of any or all such property if the owners shall agree to participate in such redevelopment in conformity with the redevelopment plan adopted by the legislative body for the area. This provision does not prohibit such owners from submitting an alternative plan as provided in this act.

# Legal Designation of Area B as Blighted

The definition of blight in the Community Redevelopment Act that applies in some cases to all of Area B, in other cases to parts of Area B is as follows:

Sec. 2. It is hereby found and declared that there exist in many communities in this State blighted areas which constitute either social or economic liabilities, or both, requiring redevelopment in the interest of health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the communities in which they exist



and of the people of this state generally. These blighted areas are characterized by one or more of the following conditions:

- (a) .....(not applicable)
- (b) An economic dislocation, deterioration or disuse, as a result of faulty planning, the subdividing and the sale of lots of irregular form and shape and inadequate size for proper usefulness and development, the laying out of lots in disregard of the contours and other physical characteristics of the ground and surrounding conditions, or the existence of inadequate streets, open spaces and utilities, or of lots or other areas which are subject to being submerged by water.
- (c) A prevalence of depreciated values, impaired investments and social and economic maladjustment to such an extent that there exists a reduced capacity to pay taxes and consequent inadequacy of tax receipts in relation to the cost of public services rendered.
- (d) A growing and in some instances a total lack of proper utilization of areas, resulting in a stagnant and unproductive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare;...(remainder not applicable)

Referring to the parts of Section 2, of the Act, just quoted, Area B may be charactized as "blighted" for the following reasons:

- 1. There exists in the area an "economic disuse".

  Vacant land, comprising 81.9 per cent of the
  area, constitutes an economic disuse. This
  economic disuse is the result of:
- 2. "faulty planning". This is decidedly evident from the street layout and from the lack of any provisions for future community facilities.
- 3. "the subdividing and sale of lots of irregular form and shape and inadequate size for proper usefulness and development". In Area B, the major fault of the subdivision design has been the disregard of the topography. The size of lots, however, has not been well planned to meet the special needs of the hilly area, and the shape of some of the lots is awkward and impractical.
- 4. "the laying out of lots in disregard of the contours and other physical characteristics of the ground and surrounding conditions". This, as described previously in this report, has been one of the major blighting influences in the area. The lots have been of the usual San Francisco pattern, or are even longer than usual. Quite often, as a result, the rear lot line has been



fifty feet or more in elevation above the front lot line. Lot layout has ignored steep grades, outcroppings of rocks, and cliffs.

- 5. 'the existence of inadequate streets, open spaces and utilities". As noted previously in this report, the streets that have been platted are inadequate. Any street with a 30 per cent grade or more is unquestionably inadequate. Twelve per cent of the platted streets exceed this grade. The open spaces that now exist in the area other than Glen Park and Douglass Playgrounds, have no permanent status. If the area were built up as it is now platted, the open spaces would be inadequate. The major part of the area is not served by utilities of any kind. However, as there is no population in 81.9 per cent of the area, no judgment of adequacy of utilities can be made.
- 6. "economic maladjustment to such an extent that there exists a reduced capacity to pay taxes." As noted previously in this report, 12.0 acres of land in Area B have been tax delinquent for more than five years and tax deed titles have been taken by the State of California. In addition, tax delinquency for periods of less than five years has been found in other parts of the area.
- 7. "lack of proper utilization of areas, resulting in stagnant and unproductive condition of land potentially useful and valuable." As noted previously, less than 20 per cent of the land is in "economic use," although real estate subdivision started in the area in 1863 and most of the area was subdivided by 1891. Thus development in the area can be characterized as "arrested."

In consideration of the seven specific points above, it is the finding of the Redevelopment Agency that Area B is a "blighted area," as defined in the Community Redevelopment Act of California.

### Boundaries of Area B

The Community Redevelopment Act of California defines a redevelopment area as follows:

Sec. 5. "Redevelopment area" means an area of a community which the legislative body thereof finds is a blighted area whose redevelopment is necessary to effectuate the public purposes declared in this act. A redevelopment area need not be restricted to, or consist entirely of, buildings, improvements, or lands which of themselves are detrimental or inimical to the public health, safety or welfare, but may consist of an area in which such conditions predominate and injuriously affect the entire area.



A redevelopment area may therefore include lands, buildings or improvements which of themselves are not detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare, but whose inclusion is found necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area of which they are a part."

From this definition, the Redevelopment Agency has established the boundaries of Area B to include an area whose planned redevelopment as a whole is necessary to effectuate the public purposes declared in the Community Redevelopment Act. Following is a point by point summary of how Area B qualifies as a redevelopment area under the Act:

- (1) Blight does exist in the proposed redevelopment area as previously shown.
- (2) The boundaries of the proposed redevelopment area have been drawn so that although some non-blighted properties are included, blight does predominate in the entire area. (81.9 per cent of the area is vacant, therefore 81.9 per cent of the area be classified as 'economically arrested,' or blighted)
- (3)The existence of a blighted arrested area does "injuriously affect" the adjacent area as explained below. When an area is so poorly subdivided that building development is sparse and uncertain, stores, schools, or transit will generally not be provided to serve that area. People living in scattered dwellings on the fringes of this vacant area need these community facilities, but frequently do not get them because they are unprofitable to install. Whereas fringe properties are often injuriously affected by arrested subdivisions, planned developments with a definite boundary known in advance need not have this same blighting effect. For example, community facilities can be installed in residential areas next to large permanent open spaces such as the Golden Gate Park, when the number of homes to be built within a few years can be estimated with reasonable accuracy.
- (4) Although many non-blighted structures are included in the proposed redevelopment area, the boundaries of the area must be drawn to include all properties which may be directly affected or which form part of the area necessary for adequate replanning. Staff personnel has made careful field checks of the entire boundary area to examine the relationship of each piece of property to the proposed redevelopment area as a whole, and has recommended inclusion only of those properties which would clearly be affected by redevelopment. Not all properties included in the redevelopment area will be acquired by the Agency, as explained more fully in the next section.



The foregoing points serve to establish the finding that Area B meets the legal and technical qualifications for a redevelopment area. The Redevelopment Agency recommends that the Board of Supervisors designate this area as a redevelopment area in order to carry out the public purposes of the Community Redevelopment Act.

## Project Plans

After such designation, the Agency and the Department of City Planning, cooperatively, according to the provisions of Article 7 of the Act, will prepare preliminary and tentative project plans for the entire area or for one or more selected portions of the area. These project plans will be based on a careful analysis of the need and market for housing of various types in San Francisco, the particular conditions of the site and of adjoining sections, and the needs and desires of owners of property in the area.

In all probability, only a few of the existing structures will need to be removed. Nevertheless any buildings of shoddy construction, dilapidation, inappropriate use or other blighting characteristics injurious to existing and new homes in the area will be eliminated. In addition, there may be a very few structures that must be eliminated because they interfere with necessary elements in the site plan, such as streets or schools. In some cases, such buildings may be moved to other sites. Not until final redevelopment plans are adopted will it be known definitely how each piece of property will be affected. And not until final redevelopment plans are accepted by the Board of Supervisors can the Redevelopment Agency purchase property.

Before any redevelopment plan is adopted it must be reviewed and approved at several stages by the Planning Commission and by the Board of Supervisors. Public hearings must be held at least two times, and more often if necessary. Property owners and citizens will be kept informed of the plans and actions in redevelopment, and may express their opinions at the public hearings, or directly to the Redevelopment Agency at 100 Larkin Street.

## Financial Considerations

No detailed financial analyses of the area have been made. However, from the general inspection of the area, and noting its possibilities as a future neighborhood, it appears that, in this case, redevelopment would pay for itself. In other words, the amount invested in the area in the redevelopment process would be returned to the city as private enterprise takes over the property again. It may be that the project might yield a small net gain which would be returned to the Redevelopment Revolv ing Fund to help finance projects in other parts of the city.



Furthermore, all properties, when resold to private builders, will be returned to the tax rolls. Not only will the value of the land be enhanced by the redevelopment process, but also the new structures to be built will add several million dollars of assessables. These additions to the assessed valuations of the city will bring additional revenues into the public treasury for many years to come.

In order to finance the operations of the Redevelopment Agency during the redevelopment period, it will be necessary to secure advances and temporary loans for completing plans, acquiring property, and preparing the land for rebuilding, including street and utility improvements. Some of such improvement, however, may be installed according to the project plan, after resale to the private developers, rather than being paid for by the Agency. It is hoped that the federal financial assistance, available under the U. S. Housing Act of 1949, will be sufficient to cover all necessary financing for redeveloping Area B, including planning advances and temporary loans. Should adequate federal funds not be available, the Agency is empowered to issue its own revenue bonds to be secured by the redevelopment properties and their ultimate resale values. When all the land is disposed of to private builders and to public agencies for parks and schools, it is expected that the funds so derived will be sufficient to liquidate all advances, temporary loans or other project financing.



#### PART IV

# THE CONTRIBUTION OF REDEVELOPMENT IN DIAMOND HEIGHTS TO SAN FRANCISCO

Proposed redevelopment in Area B would bring many advantages to the city as a whole. Increased tax revenues have already been mentioned. In addition, many new attractive homes together with parks, playgrounds, schools and shopping facilities would be provided to form new up-to-date neighborhoods of which San Francisco could be justly proud. These and other advantages are described in more detail relow.

## Parks for City-wide Use

The proposed plan for redevelopment would keep Glen Canyon itself in its present rugged natural state for recreation needs of San Francisco children and adults as well. Glen Canyon is very well suited and situated as a place where city children can spend a whole day in country-like surroundings. The view of the open canyon would be an attractive feature of the homes to be built on the western slopes of the hills.

Furthermore, the area would contain other parks and playgrounds, some of them in connection with new school sites, others on the hilltops affording sweeping views of the city, the Eay and the East Bay hills.

## New Homes

By bringing Diamend Heights into a well-conceived use, San Francisco would gain more housing. These new homes would be conveniently located in the center of the city. It would mean that more people who work in San Francisco could live here too, instead of in one of the mushrooming suburbs.

The hills above the canyon would have some 2,500 to 3,000 new homes built on them, as part of new, well planned neighborhoods. Opportunities to build these homes, some for sale, others for rent, would be made available to private builders of various types, including those who might wish to build several hundred dwellings, and those who desired to operate on a much smaller scale. The majority of the dwellings would be in the cost or rental range of moderate income families, although the ultimate development may include some luxury type dwellings, and perhaps some low rent public housing.

According to present plans, many types of new dwellings would be built, each type in the appropriate place. For instance, the pleasant home-like character of Glen Park could be continued in the new development where it merges with the new built-up section. The hillside houses overlooking Mission Valley, with their old trees and their well laid-out gardens,



would have neighbors that also have trees and gardens. There would be no sudden break in the character of the neighborhood as one passes into the redeveloped area; the new homes would harmonize with those already built. In this way, present real estate values would be enhanced by good development, rather than blighted by arrested development.

In the heart of the redevelopment area the new homes would have spectacular sites, with sweeping views from Twin Peaks and Fisherman's Wharf around to Hunter's Point and the rugged San Bruno mountains. The new buildings should be scientifically oriented to get plenty of sun and little wind. The climate of the area is one of San Francisco's best, with little fog. Thus, contemporary indoor-outdoor living would be possible and enjoyable.

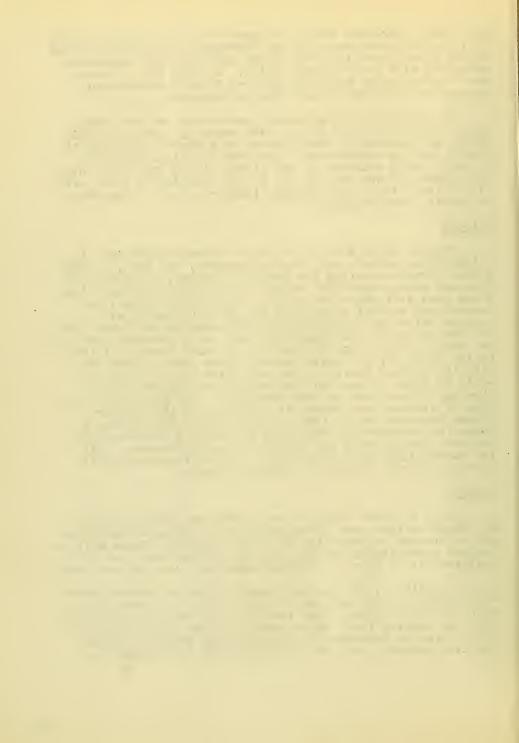
## Streets

The new homes would be on quiet streets which lead to neighborhood schools and shopping centers, and then, on wide access streets skirting the natural contours, to present or proposed expressways that connect with the rest of the city. A new road will skirt the eastern edge of the canyon, and connect the contour streets of the new development with Portola Drive and Clipper Street Extension at the north, and, via Elk, Bosworth and Diamond Streets, with Monterey, San Jose and Bernal Avenues and the proposed Mission Freeway at the south. Wide streets would connect other parts of the area with the Mission District, and with Glen Park. Great care would be taken to see that the steep, winding and narrow streets of Glen Park are not overtaxed. The proposed extension of widened Army street to connect with the Clipper Street Extension would tend to divert traffic from Area B bound for downtown San Francisco off crowded Portola Drive and onto the Bayshore and proposed Mission Freeways. All the surrounding areas would benefit by the improved traffic circulation made possible by the new streets.

## Schools

It is foreseen that two new elementary schools would be needed to take care of the children of the new population and to prevent overcrowding in nearby schools. These will be located conveniently for all children in the area, and for children living near the redevelopment area who may use them.

In addition, the redevelopment plan would provide space for possible junior and senior high schools to serve larger sections of the city. This land would be held for such possible use pending final determinations as to their locations in the area or elsewhere. If these sites were not needed for high schools, they could be developed for residences.



## Shopping

New neighborhood shopping centers would also be needed. The stores would have enough off-street parking space around them, and would be located so that most housewives could walk to them for their daily shopping. In addition to providing new business opportunities in the area's local shopping centers, the buying power of the new residents would serve to increase the sales of merchants in Glen Park, along Twenty-fourth street, in other parts of the Mission District, and elsewhere in San Francisco.

## Planning and Redevelopment

One of the greatest advantages that redevelopment can bring in the growth of San Francisco is a working example of good planning. For land that is now poorly planned, such as that in Diamond Heights, that is extremely important. It would be unfortunate to encourage building in the area as it is now designed; this would establish permanent conditions leading to blight in what is potentially one of the best areas of San Francisco. Action is needed now to make sure that any building in the area will be good building, done as a part of good design for a good neighborhood. Appropriate restrictions on land sold to private developers would aid in accomplishing this result.

Redevelopment in Diamond Heights could also become an excellent demonstration of the redevelopment program and its benefits. The public would see that the Redevelopment Agency does no building, that redevelopment can open up "frozen" areas to private enterprise, and that redevelopment is good development, designed to fit into the Master Plan of the city. The public would see the profitable and effective results of the cooperation of public and private enterprise.

# Relation of Redevelopment in Diamond Heights and in the Jefferson Square Neighborhood

San Francisco, like other American cities, has directed most of its redevelopment activities toward closely-built, run-down residential areas. It has recognized that the rebuilding of those blighted areas is of primary importance to San Francisco in order to eliminate unsafe and unsanitary dwellings and to provide new opportunities for private building near the heart of the city.

However, rebuilding of the congested residential areas, such as the Jefferson Square neighborhood of the Western Addition, cannot be undertaken until the residents of the area have other places in which to live. This is one of the specific requirements of the Community Redevelopment Act (Section 68), and of the United States Housing Act of 1949, as a prerequisite to federal assistance. Therefore, the housing shortage in San Francisco must be eased in order



to create a generally looser housing market in which substitute dwellings can be found for displaced families.

The only apparent practical method of substantially easing the housing shortage is to build more houses. The principal remaining places to build in San Francisco are in the "arrested areas." In opening up Diamond Heights, sites for many new houses can be made available. Although only a small portion of those residing in the Jefferson Square area can afford new private housing, any increase in supply will affect the general housing market.

As families who can afford new housing move into it, they move out of other dwellings throughout the city. Other families move into the vacancies so created, producing still other vacancies at various rentals for those whose incomes do not permit them to buy or rent new housing. Such vacancies will thus aid in solving the rehousing problem of the present Jefferson Square residents.

It is therefore the opinion of the Redevelopment Agency that redevelopment in Jefferson Square and other built up area can be carried out more rapidly if redevelopment in Diamond Heights is pressed to completion as promptly as possible.

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#### PART V

### AN APPROACH TO SITE PLANNING

A first step toward an understanding of the reasons for the proposed redevelopment in Diamond Heights is the creation of a mental image of what the area will look like in terms of urban features - such as streets, houses, schools, parks, views, and the like - after development has taken place. Toward this end one might imagine Miraloma Heights or Golden Gate Heights as they appeared twenty-five years ago prior to the re-platting of the street system and compare them with what has been built since; contour streets of easy gradient, parks and school sites set aside at appropriate locations and homes with maximum view and livability.

However, in visualizing Diamond Heights after the proposed redevelopment has been completed, we must be reminded that times have changed and planning concepts have advanced considerably. We may now look toward an even more complete job of neighborhood reconstruction based on the most up-to-date principles of community design. Some of these are:

- A street system distributing through traffic around rather than within the area.
- Development of neighborhoods as self-contained as may be feasible and desirable.
- Integration into the surrounding present development where appropriate.
- 4. Provision of a full range of dwelling types including homes, row houses, and garden or possibly elevator apartments.
- Provision of space for all needed neighborhood facilities - schools, playgrounds, parks, shopping centers, churches and the like.
- Proper access by major thoroughfares to all parts of the city.

What, then, are the potentialities of the area in terms of development along the lines of the modern concepts of city planning?

First, let us examine the street pattern of the redevelopment area as it could be laid out under the proposed plan. (See Plate 1.) The most striking feature and the key access road will be the Canyon Drive along the east side of Glen Canyon connecting Bosworth street and Portola Drive. This perimeter drive bounding the entire proposed residential section on the west will serve as a major feeder street to



the remainder of the street system. Clipper street will serve this purpose on the north, and Douglass and Diamond streets extended will do so on the east side of the area. This system of major circulation will discourage traffic from passing through the quiet residential neighborhoods of Glen Park and the upper Mission District. Secondary feeder streets within the Diamond Heights area will connect all parts of the residential neighborhood to the shopping centers, schools, playgrounds and parks. The more important streets will be wide and generous; the minor streets will be of minimum width and will not induce through traffic.

Centers for community life in the redevelopment area will be conveniently located schools, shopping areas and possibly churches, clubs or other neighborhood organizations, for which sites will be reserved. The two school sites will be of sufficient size for school buildings and playgrounds to serve the children of the new population, and to relieve overloading of nearby schools. The two small neighborhood shopping centers will have ample off-street parking space, and will be adequate to provide the daily household needs to those housewives who live nearby, but will not detract from the community shopping trade of Twenty-fourth street and Glen Park.

According to the plan, all of the land in Glen Canyon lying below the proposed Canyon Drive will be reserved in its present rugged state to be used for appropriate public recreation purposes, including the Day Camp available to children from all over the city. The present Glen Park Playground will be used by children of the Glen Park area and certain nearby portions of the redevelopment area. Douglass Playground in the northeastern corner of the redevelopment area will attract children from the nearby sections. Additional playground facilities will be made available adjacent to the new schools. Placed on hilltops in the new neighborhood design will be small parks designed primarily as outlook points above the city, and for recreation spots for small children and their parents.

A wide range of dwelling types is proposed to conform with building sites and housing needs and markets. It is contemplated that the design of these homes will be in keeping with the Western tradition of comfort and contemporary architectural style. The buildings will include those types which have proven to be the most popular and successful in San Francisco along with certain new types of buildings well suited to the rolling hills. On the steeper slopes the typical San Francisco row house will be adapted to the hills in the form of step-down apartments. This recently developed dwelling type takes advantage of steep hills and permits views on three sides of the house, in addition to the open space made available through use of the roof of the downhill unit as a porch. The new buildings in the redevelopment area should be designed to merge with the buildings existing on the fringes of the area. There will be no sharp line indicating where redevelopment begins and ends. There will be no difference between the general appearance of the new and the old build-



ings; however, the new neighborhoods will have planned-in-advance facilities that are often left out of areas that "just grow." These can be achieved by a well thought out design for the area.

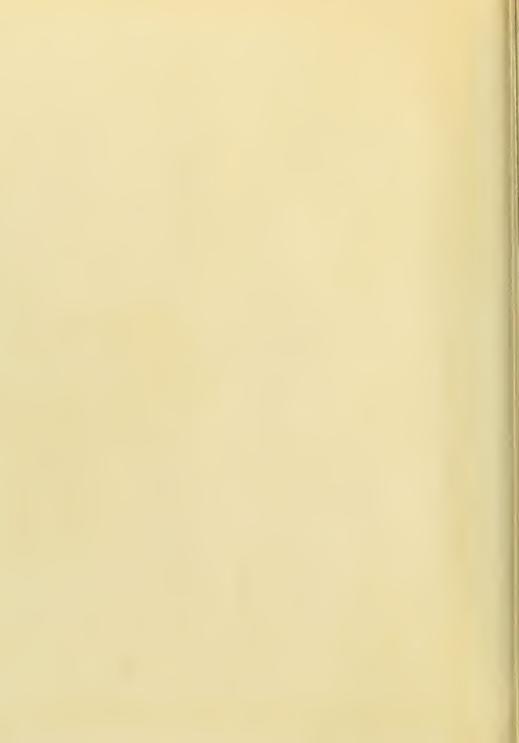
This redevelopment area can be a working example of the advantages of contemporary western design as applied to entire neighborhoods.

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